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REGIONAL COOPERATION

Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific: Phase II (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, 1985-1994, was proclaimed by the General Assembly through its resolution 39/227 of 18 December 1984. A mid-term review of the Decade was undertaken in 1989-1990 with the aim of assessing the impact of the programmes of the Decade implemented during the first quinquennium on national plans and policies in the Asian and Pacific region; identifying crucial short- and long-term transport and communications problems; and determining priorities for the second quinquennium of the Decade. As a result of the findings and recommendations stemming from the review, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1991/75 of 26 July 1991 on phase II of the Decade, in which it recommended to the General Assembly that it change the period of the second quinquennium to cover the period 1992-1996, to permit, through closer cooperation of the countries and organizations concerned, the formulation and implementation of a new regional action programme to create a greater impact of the Decade. The Economic and Social Council, in that resolution, also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution to the Council at its substantive session of 1992, and every two years thereafter until the end of phase II of the Decade.

* E/1994/100.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report presents a summary of developments in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/75 of 26 July 1991 on phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, 1985-1994, which have taken place in the regions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) since the last report of the Secretary-General on the Decade to the Economic and Social Council (E/1992/61 and Add.1), at its substantive session of 1992.

2. It highlights the status of implementation of the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade in the ESCAP region, the mobilization of requisite resources, the inter-agency cooperation, Decade coordination, monitoring and reporting, and the interregional coordination between ESCAP and ESCWA as well as the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

I. STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

3. A number of legislative and inter-agency meetings were held in 1991 and 1992 to formulate the regional action programme. The implementation of the programme commenced immediately after its endorsement and the launching of phase II of the Decade by the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Transport and Communications, held at Bangkok in June 1992. Based on the themes and related issues 1/ selected for phase II of the Decade, the programme comprises 47 activities to be carried out by the following 11 implementing agencies: ESCAP, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO); World Bank; International Telecommunication Union (ITU); International Maritime Organization (IMO); Universal Postal Union (UPU); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), and the Forum Secretariat.

4. The regional action programme takes into account not only the needs of the developing countries in the region and the capacity of the implementing agencies but also a realistic view of resources likely to be available, based on the level of funds received in the first quinquennium of the Decade. It was developed in close consultation with donors, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

5. Twenty-seven of the 47 activities in the regional action programme are currently under implementation. In the course of its formulation, a number of national institutes in the region were identified for direct involvement in implementation, particularly in undertaking research and training. One example is the Korea Maritime Institute, which has, in cooperation with ESCAP, undertaken a major study on the prospects for container shipping and port development for the East Asian subregion through the application of the Maritime Policy Planning Model. Identification of national training centres is under way for the implementation of the activities related to standardization of training programmes for port workers (implemented by the ILO); development of urban

transport activities, including training (implemented jointly by the World Bank and ESCAP); and development of human resources and management information systems training for inland waterways (implemented by ESCAP). Recognizing that the involvement of national institutes could contribute to the national capacity-building and the promotion of technical cooperation among developing countries, the implementing agencies are endeavouring to seek the participation of more national institutes in the activities of the programme.

6. Close contact with the existing subregional organizations as well as subregional groupings are maintained to ensure coordination and cooperation in the implementation of the relevant activities of the regional action programme. Seven activities in the programme are directed towards subregions such as Indochina, the Association of the South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Pacific Island countries, South Asia and North-East Asia in the areas of civil aviation and maritime transport. However, owing to the delay in funding, only one of the seven activities is currently under implementation. In this connection, emphasis has been placed by ESCAP on strengthening cooperation between ESCAP and the subregional organizations in order to facilitate the exchange of experience and cooperate and collaborate, to the extent possible, on development issues and concerns of mutual interest, including transport and communications. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is rendering cooperation to ESCAP in the implementation of the activity on Asian land transport infrastructure development, which comprises the development of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway and facilitation of land transport. ESCAP participated in the Meeting of Ministers of Transport of ECO Member Countries, which was held at Alma Ata in October 1993. The Meeting adopted the Outline Plan for the Development of the Transport Sector in the ECO Region, to which inputs had been provided by ESCAP. ASEAN and ESCAP are undertaking a corridor study for South-East Asia for the activity on the development on multimodal transport. The organization of the first consultative meeting among the executive heads of subregional organizations in Asia and the Pacific and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, held in Bangkok in February 1994, had positive effects on the strengthening of regional cooperation through subregional organizations. While the remaining activities in the regional action programme do not cater for the needs of particular subregions, the utmost efforts are being made, wherever possible, to implement them at the subregional level, so as to create a greater impact.

7. Efforts are being continued for the joint implementation of activities by the participating agencies of phase II of the Decade, most of which are in the United Nations system. There are 10 joint agency proposals in the regional action programme. To date, seven joint activities are being implemented in the areas of telecommunications (implemented by APT and ITU, and by APT and the World Bank), postal services (implemented by UPU and ESCAP), multimodal transport (implemented by UNCTAD and ESCAP), road user charges (implemented by the World Bank and ESCAP), urban transport (implemented by the World Bank and ESCAP in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB)), and facilitation of maritime traffic (implemented by IMO and ESCAP). It is envisaged that the implementation of the eighth joint UNCTAD/ESCAP activity on railway operations will commence soon, upon completion of the agreement with the Government of Bangladesh.

8. The commercial sectors have been closely involved in the implementation of the activities of the action programme which are related to the development of demand, capacity and investment planning models in the maritime sector and to the commercialization of transport and communications operations, particularly in the area of civil aviation, telecommunications and ports. Examples of the involvement of the commercial sectors include financing and operation of the proposed inland container depot outside metro Manila, to which the ESCAP/UNDP Financial Economic Planning Models have been applied, and financial support for the national cost from the Korean Shipowners' Association to the Korea Maritime Institute for undertaking a subregional study on the prospects for container shipping and port development in the East Asian subregion.

9. As determined by the Meeting of Ministers and endorsed by the Commission at its forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions, the regional action programme is to be kept flexible to accommodate the changing needs of members and associate members in the region during the remaining period of phase II of the Decade. For example, the importance of rural infrastructure development was emphasized by the Commission at its fiftieth session, held at New Delhi in April 1994, for which efforts need to be intensified by the implementing agencies.

II. MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

10. The implementation of many of the activities included in the regional action programme has been delayed, owing to the lack or late arrival of extrabudgetary funds from donors. In most cases, the funds secured for the implementation of the activities are not adequate for the full implementation of those activities.

11. To date, approximately US$ 28.9 million have been either contributed or pledged by UNDP, bilateral donors (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea) and the commercial sectors for the implementation of various activities under the regional action programme by 11 agencies. The amount represents the contribution/pledging in cash and, therefore, excludes the contribution/pledging in kind, such as the provision of non-reimbursable experts and equipment.

12. In October 1993, $12 million were approved by UNDP in support of the implementation of the regional action programme through the fifth cycle intercountry programme (1993-1997) for economic reforms through enhanced transport and communications services (RAS/92/038). The programme involves nine executing agencies: ESCAP, UNCTAD, ILO, ICAO, World Bank, ITU, IMO, UPU and APT, and covers the following four areas: organizational and managerial reforms; management tools and training; support for reintegrating economies internally and with the global economy; and environmental impacts. An additional $9.15 million have been allocated by UNDP from its Global Environment Facility (GEF) allocation and its fifth-cycle intercountry programme subregional allocation for Indo-China.

13. The bilateral extrabudgetary resources that have been mobilized are mainly for the implementation of the ESCAP activities in the regional action programme, including one joint ESCAP/IMO activity on the facilitation of maritime traffic.

In addition, the Governments of France, Germany, Japan and the Republic of Korea have been providing non-reimbursable experts to ESCAP to assist in the implementation of the activities in the regional action programme.

14. As for the contribution from the commercial sectors, $4.75 million were allocated by the Japan Postal Administration during the period 1993-1994 for the implementation of the activity on the development of a tracking and tracing system for express mail service by UPU.

15. The total amount of resources committed to date is still modest, compared with $23 million raised by ESCAP for the implementation of its activities during the first quinquennium of the Decade. Sharing the concern expressed by the Commission, at its forty-ninth session in April 1993, over the level of resource mobilization and the time-frame of phase II, the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session held in Geneva in July 1993, adopted resolution 1993/63 of 30 July 1993 on resource mobilization for the implementation of the regional action programme for phase II (1992-1996) of the Decade, in which it recommended to the General Assembly that it encourage donors to contribute to the implementation of the programme. The General Assembly, at its forty-eighth session, adopted resolution 48/177 of 21 December 1993, in which it requested the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme, bilateral donors and all Governments in a position to do so to ensure that the regional action programme would be implemented effectively.

16. The implementing agencies of the regional action programme have been continuing their efforts in seeking new donors, while UNDP has recently mounted a resource mobilization mission in the region for possible co-financing from other donors. At the same time, efforts are being made by the implementing agencies to optimize the use of the available funds through promotion of technical cooperation among developing countries and the engagement of regional expertise.

III. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

17. The Inter-agency Steering Committee on Phase II (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, which was established by the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Transport and Communications, held its first and second annual meetings in Geneva in December 1992 and in Bangkok in December 1993. It also convened an ad hoc meeting in Geneva in July 1993 to consider the issue of resource mobilization. The Steering Committee, at its first meeting, determined its terms of reference. Its major responsibilities are to facilitate inter-agency coordination and cooperation; guide, monitor and evaluate the activities of the regional action programme so as to avoid duplication and develop a joint approach, as appropriate; and identify new transport and communications problems and developments occurring in the Asian and Pacific region, so as to recommend necessary adjustments in the regional action programme in the light of changing circumstances. The membership comprises, in addition to all implementing agencies of the regional action programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the ASEAN secretariat, Asian-Pacific Postal Union (APPU) and the Forum Secretariat. Two regional commissions, ECE and the Economic and

Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) are associate members. In view of the recently developed cooperation, ECO and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will be invited to join the Steering Committee.

IV. DECADE COORDINATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING

18. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, at its forty-seventh session held at Bangkok in April 1991, mandated the lead role in monitoring, coordinating and reporting on the Decade to its Executive Secretary, as recommended in the report of the mid-term review of the Decade. In order to strengthen the capability of ESCAP in Decade coordination, the General Assembly, at its forty-sixth session, endorsed the provision of a temporary P-3 post to the ESCAP secretariat for the biennium 1992-1993. The continued provision of the post for the biennium 1994-1995 was approved by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The role of ESCAP in Decade coordination includes, inter alia, the organization of meetings of the Inter-agency Steering Committee; the organization of ad-hoc intergovernmental meetings on phase II of the Decade in 1994 and 1996; the preparation of progress reports to various legislative meetings on the implementation of the regional action programme and related activities; and the coordination of interregional cooperation with ESCWA.

19. For monitoring the activities of the regional action programme which are funded by UNDP under its fifth-cycle intercountry programme (RAS/92/038), the UNDP established the Programme Management Committee to review the individual work plans of the implementing agencies; exchange views; verify relevance to country situations; and determine, as necessary, the modification of the activities in the programme. The Committee comprises governmental and private-sector personnel acting in their personal capacities. The first meeting was convened in Bangkok in December 1993, immediately preceding the second annual meeting of the Inter-agency Steering Committee.

20. For wide dissemination of information on Decade activities, a semi-annual newsletter, Decade News, has been issued by ESCAP in cooperation with the other concerned organizations, since the beginning of 1992. A coordination and monitoring system was developed by ESCAP to facilitate compilation of information required for reporting on the Decade to various meetings and to establish a compendium of national, subregional and regional activities relating to transport and communications for identifying the linkages among these activities. The monitoring and coordination system was considered by the Inter-agency Steering Committee at its second annual meeting, at which it agreed that, for the implementation of the system, ESCAP and UNDP should cooperate closely in developing a common reporting format. Work is currently under way towards this end.

V. INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

21. Close contact has been maintained between ESCAP and ESCWA since the launching of phase II of the Decade. The activities of the ESCWA secretariat, however, are limited to coordination and follow-up actions of the ESCAP activities on the Decade, owing to total absence of adequate funds for Decade

implementation in the ESCWA region. Two missions to ESCWA in Amman were undertaken by ESCAP in the fourth quarter of 1992, to brief the ESCWA secretariat on the Meeting of Ministers and the regional action programme and to outline how ESCAP could support the programme of ESCWA for phase II. A proposal was made to develop a joint UNCTAD/ESCAP/ESCWA activity on the development of multimodal transport, focusing on human resources development. Possible donor support has not yet been obtained.

22. Frequent exchange of information has been maintained between ESCAP and ECE in the implementation of the activity on Asian land transport infrastructure development, with particular focus on facilitation measures. This cooperation could contribute to the development of reliable and efficient land transport linkages within Asia and between Asia and Europe.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

23. The Economic and Social Council is requested to note the progress which has taken place since the launching of phase II of the Decade and to encourage the concerned parties, in particular the donors, to respond to the requests made by the General Assembly in resolution 48/177 for the effective implementation of the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade and the strengthening of interregional cooperation between the ESCAP, ESCWA and ECE regions.

Notes

1/ The themes and issues are: institutional development (theme 1); transport and communications operations (theme 2); human resources development (theme 3); multimodal transport and logistics (issue 1); commercialization of transport and communications operations (issue 2); environment, health and safety in transport (issue 3); and urban transport (issue 4).